

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01

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R 011532Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6661

INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL IBADAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, NI

SUBJECT: POLITICAL MOOD IN NIGERIA: ONE MONTH AFTER

REF: LAGOS 9310

SUMMARY: ONE MONTH AFTER GOWON'S OCTOBER 1ST SPEECH ANNOUNCING INTENTION OF MILITARY TO REMAIN IN POWER BEYOND 1976, POLITICAL MOOD IN NIGERIA IS SEEMILGLY ONE OF ALMOST PARADOXICAL DICHOTOMY. ON SURFACE FMG APPEARS PERHAPS BETTER ENTRENCHED THROUGHOUT FEDERATION THAN FOR SOME TIME IN PAST, YET THERE ARE SIGNS THAT GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE NO LESS JITTERY THAN IN WEEKS BEFORE OCTOBER 1ST. EMBASSY SEES NO OMENS OF SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO REGIME AND CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT FMG CAN CONTAIN, AT LEAST FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE, ANY DISSIDENT ELEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. ONE MONTH AFTER GENERAL GOWON ANNOUNCED THAT MILITARY WOULD NOT RELINQUISH POWER IN 1976 (LAGOS 9194), POLITICAL MOOD IN NIGERIA IS ONE OF SEEMINGLY ALMOST PARADOXICAL  
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CICHOTOMY. ON SURFACE AT LEAST, GENERAL POPULATION (WITH

SOME MINOR EXCEPTIONS) HAS APPARENTLY ACCEPTED FMG DECISION WITH EQUANIMITY, IF NOT ALWAYS ENTHUSIASM. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT GOVERNMENT LEADERS ARE NO LESS JITTERY AND UNSURE OF THEMSELVES THAN IN WEEKS BEFORE OCTOBER 1ST (LAGOS 8881).

2. DURING PAST MONTH GOWON AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS HAVE USED (OR CREATED) WHATEVER OPPORTUNITIES THEY COULD (E.G., GOWON'S BIRTHDAY, EID-EL-FITR CELEBRATIONS ENDING RAMADAN, PRESS CONFERENCES AND INTERVIEWS, UNIVERSITY CONVOCATIONS) TO EMPHASIZE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MILITARY REGIME, CALL FOR POPULAR SUPPORT, AND ISSUE VEILED (AND SOMETIMES NOT SO VEILED) THREATS AGAINST THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES "THREATENING" UNITY AND STABILITY. MOST EXPLICIT EXAMPLE OF THESE EFFORTS CAME DURING SPECIAL CONVOCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF IFE (IBADAN A-017), WHEN WESTERN STATE GOVERNOR ROTIMI, DRESSED IN FULL MILITARY UNIFORM, LECTURED AUDIENCE (INCLUDING YORUBA LEADER AWOLOWO) ON FACT "OUR COUNTRY STILL SOUNDS TOO MANY DISCORDANT NOTES" AND THAT "THERE IS IN THIS COUNTRY ENOUGH FOR EVERYBODY'S NEED BUT NOT FOR EVERYBODY'S GREED."

3. BY THEMSELVES THESE SPEECHES AND OFF-THE-CUFF REMARKS MIGHT BE DISMISSED AS MERE FORM OF CAMPAIGN RHETORIC, BUT THERE ARE OTHER INDICATIONS THAT THEY ARE AT LEAST PARTIALLY BASED ON NERVOUSNESS AT SENIOR GOVERNMENT LEVELS. AS REPORTED IN LAGOS A-216, FMG HAS BEEN MORE HEAVY-HANDED THAN USUAL IN REACTING TO PRESS CRITICISM: GOVERNMENT, AS ONE EXAMPLE, HAS NOW DETAINED EDUCATOR AND TRIBUNE COLUMNIST TAI SOLARIN FOR OVER TWENTY DAYS FOR WRITING FLYER ATTACKING DECISION OF FMG TO REMAIN IN POWER. SOLARIN'S ATTACK WAS ADMITTEDLY RATHER BLISTERING, BUT STILL SUCH LONG DETENTION OF WELL-KNOWN FIGURE SEEMS OVERREACTION. SINCE DETENTION, TOO IS APER AKU,

WHO IN SEPTEMBER PUBLICLY CHARGED BENUE-PLATEAU STATE GOVERNOR GOMWALK WITH CORRUPTION, DESPITE FACT GOMWALK HAS APPARENTLY MANAGED TO CLEAR HIMSELF (LAGOS 8650). SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS HAVE ALSO BEEN TIGHTENED --E.G., AT OFFICIAL RECEPTION GIVEN BY GOWON FOR TOGOLESE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESIDENT EYADEMA LAST WEEK TWO CHIEFS OF STATE WERE FLANKED BY HEAVY CONTINGENT OF GUARDS-- AND REPORTEDLY GOVERNMENT IS STILL BUILDING SLIT TRENCHES AROUND DODAN BARRACKS. FINALLY SENIOR CIVILIANS AND MILITARY TURN-OUT AT RECENT OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS, APPARENTLY TO GOWON'S CHAGRIN, HAS BEEN INEXPLICABLY POOR.

4. DESPITE TENUOUSNESS OF THESE SIGNS, WHEN STRUNG

TOGETHER THEY STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT FMG IS STILL JITTERY--  
AND SEEMINGLY WITHOUT REAL REASON. WHILE IT IS ALWAYS  
POSSIBLE THAT MILITARY HAS UNCOVERED SOME GOOD REASON TO  
ANTICIPATE OCCURRENCE OF DANGEROUS SITUATION, EMBASSY  
SEES NO APPARENT OMENS OF SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO REGIME.  
IN FACT, FOR MOMENT FMG IS PERHAPS BETTER ENTRENCHED  
THROUGHOUT FEDERATION NJAN IT HAS BEEN FOR SOME TIME--  
EVEN, ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM AMCONSUL IBADAN, IN  
"YORUBALAND." THUS, OUR VIEW THAT FMG WILL BE ABLE  
IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE TO CONTAIN ANY DISSIDENT ELEMENTS  
REMAINS UNCHANGED.  
REINHARDT

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